DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 043 105 EA 003 043

AUTHOR	Esbensen, Thorwald
TITLE	Using Performance Objectives. The Inadequacy of Vague Goals.
INSTITUTION	Florida State Dept. of Education, Tallahassee.; Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Educational Personnel Development.
PUB DATE	Apr 70
NOTE	42p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Office of Publications and Textbook Services, Knott Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32304 ($2.00, Quantity Discounts)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Performance, *Affective Objectives, *Cognitive Measurement, Cognitive Objectives, Differentiated Staffs, Educational Environment, *Educational Methods, Independent Study, *Performance Criteria, Self Directed Classrooms

ABSTRACT

A performance objective is a description of an observable task to be performed by a learner to demonstrate that he has learned something. Performance goals stated clearly in terms of observable student performance can be used to improve educational methods. Because it is relatively difficult to construct indirect objectives that will satisfactorily represent complex cognitive or affective achievements, educators often settle for criterion tasks that demonstrate nothing beyond the recognition or recall of information. However, performance objectives can be constructed for the cognitive and affective domains so that both students and teachers will know the desired goal and whether or not it is attained. Differentiated staffing is pertinent in freeing professional staff members from routine duties to assist students to interact with the learning environment as self-directed learners. (Author/MLF)

ED043105

NSG
EA

USING PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thorwald Esbensen

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

EA 003 043

thorwald
esbensen

Thorwald Esbensen
Professor of Education
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida

April, 1970

Published by the State of Florida, Department of Education in cooperation with the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development, U. S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare as a part of a project to explore more effective methods of school personnel utilization. Marshall L. Frinks, Project Director. All rights reserved. Further reproduction of materials in this booklet in whole or in part by permission of the author only. Copyright 1970 re: Thorwald Esbensen.

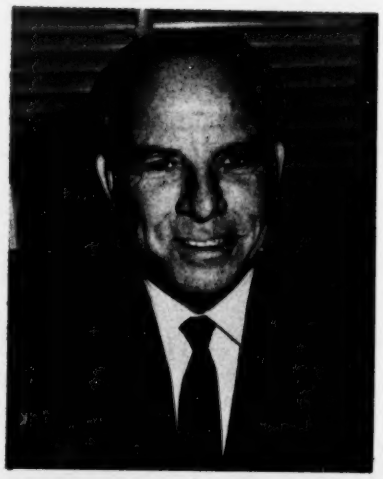
Additional copies of this publication may be obtained at $2.00 each from the Office of Publications and Textbook Services, Knott Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32304. Quantity discounts: 2-9 copies, 10 per cent; 10 or more copies, 20 per cent. Orders of $4.00 or less must be accompanied by payment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Appreciation is extended to members of the Department of Education who assisted in the production of this publication. Special recognition is due Mr. Shelley S. Boone, Director, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Dr. Joseph W. Crenshaw, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction, for their strong professional support. Also, Mr. Rodney P. Smith, Assistant Bureau Chief, Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction, provided invaluable editorial contributions. Sincere gratitude is expressed to Mr. Marshall L. Frinks, Associate, Program Development, for his encouragement and coordination of this effort.

Thorwald Esbensen

Foreword



Developments within public education in the last decade consistently have reflected our efforts to obtain and maintain educational programs, services and facilities of high quality. These measures are important, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that new roles and responsibilities are emerging in educational leadership. Most appropriate at this time in Florida are the pertinent dual roles of creating awareness of potential new concepts and the encouragement of more in-depth involvement. Even though these new steps fulfill the felt needs of many, they must have a positive influence on the educational programs of Florida.

It is hoped that this booklet and the information contained herein will orient all educators to the challenge of setting forth in comprehensive terms student performance based objectives. This booklet is consistent with Florida's educational goals and with our broad statewide philosophy, and it is intended to help all educators in the important process of educating our children.

I sincerely appreciate the cooperation and contribution that Professor Thorwald Esbensen has made in this endeavor.

Floyd T. Christian
Commissioner of Education

USING PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

The Inadequacy of Vague Goals

It is a commonplace saying in education that the proper way to begin planning any program of instruction is to set forth in comprehensive terms the educational goals of the proposed program. Most experienced educators have, at one time or another, been actively involved in such work.

Whether the job has been the relatively limited one of spelling out the overall aims of a single subject matter offering, or the more grandiose task of enunciating the entire panoply of a school system's general objectives, teachers and administrators alike have usually had at least some sort of firsthand working acquaintance with the business of delineating what it is that formal schooling is trying to accomplish.

These efforts, although presumably necessary, appear to be inadequate on two main counts:

First of all, they are almost identical in what they have to say, seemingly consisting of a series of interchangeable slogans. In the second place, as they stand, they are impossible to evaluate, for they specify nothing whatever in the way of observable practices or results that might stand for their attainment.

What is one to do with objectives that are expressed as follows:

- ★ understanding the importance of home and family;
- ★ appreciating the importance of constituted authority and the law;
- ★ enjoying beauty in nature and art;
- ★ developing creativeness and originality in classroom and other activities;
- ★ taking responsibility for one's own actions.

What is one to do with such objectives? Approve of them, perhaps. But what else? As statements that enable us to tell how well we are doing whatever it is we are trying to do, such objectives will not suffice. We need to set forth our instructional goals in terms that can be observed. This will not be easy to do. But it can be done.

Objectives We Can See or Measure

Let us begin by giving these observable aims of instruction a name. Let us call them performance objectives.

Performance objectives have to do with events or things that are observable. Even the scientist who measures subatomic particles does so by means of indicators that are, themselves, observable. Unless one wishes to make a case for extra-sensory perception, it would seem that the **data of man's senses** are in the final analysis always essential to his knowledge.

Take the case of a teacher who believes that some of his students are beginning to acquire a love of reading. How does he make this judgment? How can he tell?

Surely it is through things that he has seen and heard, through happenings that are reported to him by his senses. He may listen to what his students say about their reading. He may receive book withdrawal figures from the library. He may hear things from parents. He may consult responses to questionnaires. But whatever means he employs, his senses are crucial. If he were really and truly cut off from the evidence of his senses, he would know nothing whatsoever.

This would seem to be an obvious point. Most people would probably agree to it without argument. The trouble starts when we begin to consider some of its possible implications for formal schooling.

Before we enumerate what these implications might be, as well as certain objections to them, it may be useful to examine a few objectives to see whether we can identify those that are stated in terms of observable student performance.

Stating Objectives Clearly

HERE IS AN INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE:

"Given a topic of historical importance, the student will be able to achieve a genuine understanding as to how reliable certain documents and records are with regard to this topic."

Q. Is this objective stated in terms of observable student performance?

A. No, it is not. Having "a genuine understanding" is undoubtedly a worthy attainment. Nevertheless, this objective, as stated, is not expressed in a way that makes clear what it is that a student must do to show that he has accomplished the objective. It is not, therefore, a performance objective.

Let's try this objective:

"Given the topic, The Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians, and a list of four references concerning it (such as a modern short story, a letter written by a famous nuclear physicist, a motion picture about the love affair of Anthony and Cleopatra, and a translation of an inscription found in an old Egyptian tomb) the student will be able to place an X in front of the reference that professional historians would consider to be most reliable."

Q. Is this objective stated in terms of observable student performance?

A. Yes, it is. It makes plain what it is that a student must be able to do in order to demonstrate his accomplishment of the objective. It is, therefore, a performance objective.

Here is another objective:

"Given the important distinction between fact and opinion, the student will be able to base his conclusions or interpretations on matters of fact rather than on opinion."

Q. Is this objective expressed in terms of observable student performance?

A. No, it is not. Certainly, being able to distinguish between fact and opinion is an ability of great significance. But unless the objective in question specifically indicates how the student will show that he has achieved it, we cannot properly call it a performance objective.

Let's consider this related objective:

"Given twenty sentences, each of which purports to be a statement of fact, the student will be able with 100% accuracy to underline once those sentences that are statements of fact and to underline twice those sentences that are statements of opinion."

Q. Is this objective expressed in terms of observable student performance?

A. Yes, it is. It is now clear what it is that the student must do in order to demonstrate that he has mastered the objective.

He must perform certain observable operations specified by the objective.

The objective, therefore, is a performance objective.

TO SUMMARIZE THE MATTER BY WAY OF A

DEFINITION:

A performance objective
is a description of
an observable task to be performed
by a learner
to demonstrate that he has
learned something.

Arguments For and Against Performance Objectives

As noted, there has been considerable resistance to the implications of this approach to formal schooling. Many educators not only profess to see no reason for formulating measurable objectives. They view the whole business as being actually harmful to the process of education.

By means of a dialogue, let us now examine some of the arguments both for and against the use of performance objectives within the classroom.

We shall use a Friend of Performance Objectives to conduct one side of the give-and-take, and a Critic of Performance Objectives to present a differing point of view. As we enter the conversation, our Friend is making what the Critic takes to be an outrageous statement.

FRIEND:

I think it would not be too wide of the mark to say that whatever can be deliberately taught can be specified.

CRITIC:

That's simply preposterous. Is should be obvious to even the most rigid behaviorist that most of the important things students learn in school are not characterized by measurable outcomes. Indeed, the most important part of school for many students may have little or nothing to do with the subject matter of formal instruction.

FRIEND:

You are right, but you miss the point. It is true that some, perhaps even most, of the important things that students learn in school are not at the present time amenable to measures of performance. We have never held otherwise.

FRIEND:

Not exactly. I said that whatever can be **deliberately** taught can be specified. That's an important distinction.

FRIEND:

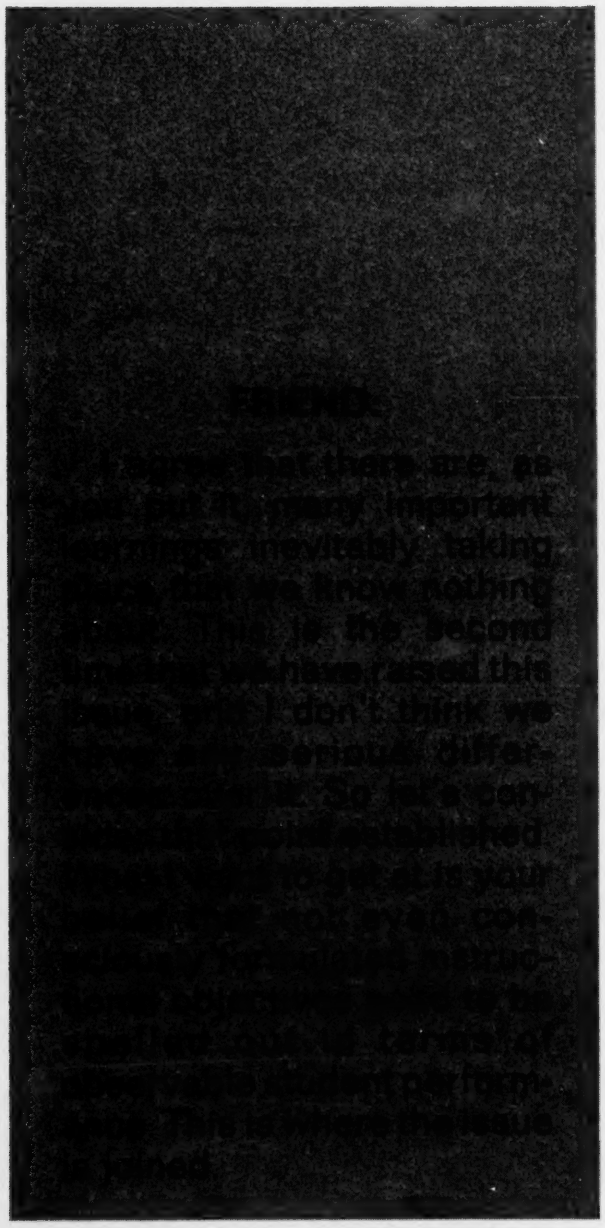
Let's look at it this way. Whatever else they may be, schools are institutions that are deliberately attempting to teach things to students. They may unwittingly cause a lot of other things to happen as well, both good and bad, but that's beside the main point, which is their effort to fulfill the purposes that justify their existence. These purposes focus upon instructing the young, not by accident but through conscious design. It would hardly make sense for a school to claim, on the one hand, that it was doing a good job, but that, on the other hand, it had no idea what its students were learning and, furthermore, didn't really care.

CRITIC:

What do you mean you have never held otherwise? Didn't you just say that whatever can be taught can be specified?

CRITIC:

I don't get it. Explain the distinction.



CRITIC:

Oh come now. You are surely not proposing this as a serious argument in support of performance objectives. We care very much what our students are learning. We simply say, first of all, that many important learnings inevitably take place that we know nothing about, and, secondly, that for those learnings we do have a handle on, so to speak, we certainly do not need anything as cumbersome and superficial as performance objectives.

FRIEND:

That **sounds** convincing, but let's explore the matter a bit further. Would you say that at least with regard to consciously held instructional objectives it is important for the teacher to be able to tell how well he is doing whatever it is he is trying to do?

CRITIC:

Yes, this is the crux of the argument. And what you keep forgetting is that teaching is an art, a highly complex art. To imprison it within the restrictive boundaries of performance objectives does violence to the role of the teacher as a creative artist.

CRITIC:

I suppose so. But what has that to do with what we've been talking about?

FRIEND:

Well, to use the terminology with which you feel comfortable, suppose a teacher wants his students to know something about the writing style of a certain author. He sets his students to work on certain learning activities and materials that he thinks will result in their attaining the desired instructional objective, namely, knowing something about the writing style of the author under consideration.

Now at some point or other, the question must be answered: Do the students, in fact, know something about the writing style of the author being studied? This is a difficult question to answer even in the best of circumstances. It is doubly hard to answer when none of the achievement indicators have been specified.

By this is meant simply that if you don't know what you're supposed to look for, how can you tell when you've seen it? It won't do just to say that you know, that you can tell in ways that are unexplainable. This leaves the matter on such a personal, arbitrary, level that it will be quite impossible to communicate the nature of your judgment to others, particularly to students. And it is the students, after all, who need to know, who **deserve** to know what is being expected of them.

Unfortunately, all too frequently, they do **not** know. When they do not know, and because for the sake of surviving in school they must try to find out, they resort to the only game that is left for them to play, the game of "out-psyching" the teacher.

All of us know this game because we have all been students and have, therefore, all played it. The rules are frustrating but familiar. The idea is to guess what will be on the chapter test, the unit test, the whatever-test-you-want-to-name. If you guess right, you're in good shape. If not, it's down the drain, one way or another. The wonder of it is that after we have become teachers, we still perpetuate this one-sided game. We do not do this with malice aforethought, but through the force of habit. We teach, in other words, the way we have been taught.

FRIEND:

Thank you for bringing me back to the point. Assuming that we do want to describe the achievement indicators (that is to say, the performance objectives) in observable terms, we must ask what it is that we want our students to be able to do. In the case of the particular objective we have been considering, we must ask how the students will demonstrate that they know something about the writing style of the designated author. This is an interesting matter to decide. The words "know something" are so vague that any one of a number of criterion statements might be appropriate.

FRIEND:

For example, we could say, "Given ten short prose passages (each passage between one hundred fifty and three hundred words in length), five passages of which are by the author in question, and five by different authors, the student will be able to identify with no more than one error the five passages written by the author being studied."

CRITIC:

All right. I'm on the side of the students too, you know. It would help if you would come back to the business of performance objectives, which is what I thought we were talking about.

CRITIC:

I think you're exaggerating the difficulty, but go ahead.

Or we could go beyond this. We could say, "Given the task of writing a one hundred fifty to three hundred word passage in the style of the author in question, the student will be able to do this so that when his composition appears as one of ten passages (each of the other nine having been written by other authors in different styles), at least two members of a three-member panel of his fellow students will be able to identify the student's passage as having been written in the style of the author being studied. Each member of the judging panel will have previously attained a perfect score on the identification objective preceding this one."

The point of these two examples is **not** that one is more appropriate than the other. Either may be quite satisfactory. What **is** important is that the teacher should decide what the criterion performance will be, and then **communicate this clearly to the students who will be expected to achieve it.**

At this point, we will take leave of our dialogue, merely reviewing the gist of it by saying: **The basic reason for using performance objectives is that no matter what it is that teachers and students are trying to do within the framework of formal schooling, they need to be able to tell, as they go along, how well they are doing it.**

Of course, other questions present themselves. One area of doubt has to do with the general quality of whatever performance objectives may actually exist in school programs today. Aren't performance objectives in reality pretty trivial and superficial? Aren't they almost always limited to certain routine competencies such as diagramming sentences, manipulating numbers, reading maps and globes, recalling or recognizing simple facts, and so on?

The answer to this question is YES. Performance objectives, as they are found in most present-day instructional programs, are every bit as pedestrian and unimaginative as their critics charge. This much is perfectly evident to even the most casual observer of the current educational scene.

Once this fact is established, the answer to another question becomes crucial.

The question is: WHY?

Why do we have so many performance objectives of the 1492 variety?

Why do we confine our criterion tasks to the relatively mundane world of recall and recognition, to the exercise of unadorned memory?

Is this low-level state of affairs caused by the very nature of performance objectives?

Or does the fault lie elsewhere?

Direct Objectives

Undoubtedly, some kinds of performance objectives are easier to construct than others. Let us classify these as **direct** objectives.

By **direct** objectives is meant those criterion performances that have to do with **external** tasks whose successful accomplishment are aims or goals just as they stand, without the additional burden of having to stand for or represent some desired internal state of being. For example, if the performance objective is to be able to run one hundred yards in ten seconds or less, we are probably talking about a **direct** objective.

We are **not**, in other words, **primarily** interested in this objective because of what it tells us about the runner's **attitude** toward running, nor because of what its attainment may imply about his possible **appreciation** of a good physical education program, nor because it might conceivably represent his **understanding** of the characteristics of an effective training program. We simply want our runner to be able to run one hundred yards in ten seconds or less, and nothing over this time will do. This is a **direct** objective, basically unrelated to any concern for the goals of knowledge, comprehension, or appreciation. The main value of meeting the performance criterion doesn't have much to do with what it may suggest about feelings, beliefs, or other internal events.

This is not to disparage the formulation of direct objectives. Far from it! The employment of a variety of overt skills is, in one way or another, indispensable at all levels of education, and in almost every aspect of everyday living. Whether we are talking about speaking or writing or a whole host of other social and vocational competencies, we must, as educators, deal with a broad range of direct objectives. They are basic elements in any well-rounded program of formal schooling. But because they are direct objectives existing within the domain of useful overt skills, they are easier to specify than are those others that we shall call **indirect** or **representational** objectives.

22

Indirect or Representational Objectives

An indirect or representational objective is what the name suggests: a criterion performance that implies the presence (or perhaps absence) of something that is not directly observable.

You will recall that we considered the case of a teacher who wants his students to know something about the writing style of a certain author. Inasmuch as the teacher is not able to open up the heads of his students and literally see the knowledge that is inside, this knowledge must be represented by some kind of event or product that is observable.

What does this teacher want his students to know, and what will he accept as evidence that they have acquired this knowledge? Operationally, the answer to the second part of this question is also the answer to the first part because the crucial thing that must be determined is what it is that the student who knows is able to do that the student who does not know is not able to do.

Of course, the words "know something" are so vague that any one of a number of criterion statements might be appropriate. We provided two possibilities to illustrate the matter. But regardless of what criterion task is selected, the point is the same: this kind of performance objective stands for or represents an internal event or state of being that is not directly observable. It is an **indirect** objective.

Because it is relatively difficult to construct **indirect** objectives that will satisfactorily represent complex cognitive or affective achievements, we often settle for criterion tasks that demonstrate nothing beyond the recognition or recall of information. However — and this is the nub of our argument — this superficial approach to instruction has not been **caused** by the use of performance objectives. What has happened is that performance objectives have made it painfully clear for the first time what it is that we have been aiming at all these years!

A look at the way we test students underlines this point. It is one thing to talk in glowing terms about helping students gain a better understanding of the United Nations. But when it turns out at test time that what we are asking students to do is list the names of the agencies that make up the United Nations, the truth of the matter becomes apparent. Despite our high-flown words, what we are rewarding is straight memory work.

Departures from this kind of low-level testing usually proceed in the direction of essay examinations. And with rare exceptions, the scores on these tests are influenced by such a conglomeration of factors (penmanship, neatness, length, style, etc.) that hardly anyone — either student or teacher — can tell you **specifically** what was desired. The point here is **not** to knock the **idea** of essay examinations, but to question seriously the slipshod manner in which they have been used. All too often, the essay exam does nothing more than obscure the fact that we are not able to spell out clearly what our instructional objectives are.

In any case, to blame performance objectives for this state of affairs is to misconstrue the situation. Our limitations have not been **caused** by performance objectives, but **revealed by them.**

Objectives in the Humanities and the Arts

Another question area is this: Given our emphasis upon the importance of using performance objectives, what happens to the humanities, to the world of creativity? Where does the discovery approach to learning fit in? How can a flexible, open-ended system of instruction function effectively within a framework of performance objectives?

In responding to this, we must keep in mind that the difference between a routine competency and a creative act is **not** that the former can be seen while the latter cannot. Both activities can be specified in such a way that they or their results are observable. The essence of creativity is the ability to perceive old things in new ways, and then to construct new forms (questions, answers, objects, events) that will reflect the fresh perception. The establishment of performance objectives is not hostile to this effort.

Suppose that we would like to have our students discover for themselves some of the varied meanings that ordinary words can have, depending on the situation to which they refer. The following performance objective specifies one possibly interesting way to proceed in this matter:

> **Given two films** . . . with different or even opposing points of view, and given a list of ten commonplace English words, the student will be able to give either orally or in writing at least one different meaning that each word might have in relation to each film.

We might select the two films, **Nahanni** and **The Smile.**

Nahanni is a story about an old man who is prospecting for gold. The locale of the film is a remote part of Canada where the Nahanni River winds its way through an awesome range of mountains. Every year for seven years the old man has spent the short summer months driving and pulling and portaging a boat up the Nahanni in a fruitless effort to discover gold along its banks. His advanced age and the formidable terrain conspire to make each seasonal expedition both exhausting and hazardous in the extreme. Each yearly effort is doomed to failure. Yet the sight of this puny figure thrusting itself against the insurmountable obstacles of white water, perpendicular cliffs, and a trackless wilderness, fills us not merely with pity for the old man, but with admiration as well. We sense that it is this kind of dogged persistence against overwhelming odds that has enabled man to survive as a species, and we may perhaps feel entitled to believe with William Faulkner that man will not only endure, he will prevail.

In a beautifully gentle way, **The Smile** offers us its contrasting view of how man should govern his existence. It is the story of one day in the life of a young Burmese boy who is studying to become a Buddhist monk. We see our novice as he travels by foot to a temple where he will learn the wisdom for living life as it ought to be lived. On the way, the young boy meets various living things — plants, animals, and people — and through the eye of the camera we are encouraged to see that all of nature is characterized by unity, and to perceive that if we are to live harmoniously with ourselves we must not set our energies against any other part of reality, but must fully accept everything as it is and will be, for only in this way may we eventually arrive at genuine inner peace and understanding.

The two films, then, are poles apart in what they have to say about the business of living. And the ten ordinary words of English we have chosen will vividly reveal this.

Let us recall our performance objective: Given two films with different or even opposing points of view, and given a list of ten commonplace English words, the student will be able to give (either orally or in writing) at least one different meaning that each word might have in relation to each film.

Here are the ten words:

rhythm *external* *temporary* *outside* *inside*

strength *beauty* *goal* *others* *parallel*

There is nothing especially significant about these particular words. This list could be extended almost without limit.

The point is that this **kind** of exercise enables us to help students discover for themselves, in an interesting and sometimes moving way, the richness of the mother tongue. And this open-ended approach to instruction is perfectly compatible with the use of performance objectives.

Indirect and Direct Objectives Summarized

Let us return to the distinction that was drawn between objectives that are **direct** and objectives that are **indirect.** It was said that **direct** objectives are those criterion performances that have to do with external tasks whose successful accomplishments are aims or goals just as they stand, without the burden of having to stand for or represent some desired **internal** state of being.

We cited the direct objective of being able to run one hundred yards in ten seconds or less. Being able to type at least fifty words per minute for ten minutes with no errors would be another example of a direct objective.

On the other hand, an **indirect** objective is a criterion performance that stands for or represents an **internal** event or state of being that is not directly observable. For example, in the cognitive area, a student might demonstrate one kind of knowledge by showing that he can punctuate sentences correctly. Using punctuation properly is an indication that the student possesses knowledge of the mechanics of punctuation.

Cognitive objectives are indirect objectives. Their satisfactory formulation in performance terms is usually more difficult to achieve than are relatively straight forward descriptions of overt motor accomplishments. Nevertheless, compared to another realm of instructional responsibility, composing cognitive objectives seems to be mere child's play.

The Affective Domain

The reference here is to the **affective** domain of human behavior. What is one to do about such matters as appreciation, respect, enjoyment, the vast world of attitudes and aspirations? Can performance criteria be formulated to serve teachers in this region of man's sensibilities? To professional humanists opposed to the very idea of behavioral objectives, the answer is a resounding NO. Indeed, the question itself is often regarded as an affront to the human spirit.

But let us examine the problem more closely. For the purpose of this examination, perhaps the most important difference between the psychomotor and cognitive domains on the one hand, and the affective domain on the other, is the difference between **can** do and **will** do.

That is to say, it is one thing for a student to acquire the competency to perform a certain task. It is another thing for this student to choose to employ his capability, given the opportunity to do so. The first matter concerns ability. The second has to do with attitude.

Attitudes express themselves as preferences. And preferences reflect values. To determine what an individual's value system is,

we must look at what he **chooses** to do. Therefore, insofar as instruction has a conscious interest in the affective domain, it must concern itself with values, with what learners **prefer** to do in given situations.

We have said that although a person may be **able** to do something, this fact by itself does not guarantee that he **will** do it. Nevertheless, the two matters are related. For although it is true that an individual **may not** do what he **can do,** it is absolutely certain that he **will not** do what he **cannot** do. Therefore, if we are to have any success in securing deliberate outcomes in the affective domain, we must make sure that we are getting significant results in the related psychomotor and cognitive areas.

That is to say, the child who does not read well is not likely to enjoy reading. A love of reading does not flourish in a vacuum. It must be sustained by **skills** in reading. Of course, the development of skills alone will not do the job. If these skills are developed under circumstances that are **unpleasant** to the learner, the result may be an aversion to the future employment of the acquired skills.

In summary, although we must approach the affective domain through the cognitive and psychomotor areas, we must make sure that our work in these latter domains is carried out under conditions that are rewarding to the learner.

Writing Objectives for the Affective Domain

Now back to the question:

Can performance objectives be written for the affective domain?

Let's take the general area of, say, DEVELOPING OPEN-MINDEDNESS.

One of many appropriate objectives for this important characteristic might read as follows: When asked to state his position with regard to a controversial issue, the student will, in the course of setting forth his own point of view, accurately summarize the arguments of others with whom he does not agree.

Let's notice something about this objective: The objective does **not** state that the student will be **able** to cite points of view different from his own, but that he **will** do so. The objective assumes that the student already knows, or can find out, about various other opinions that differ from his own, and that he is capable of reporting these fairly, **if he wants to.** It is not a question of ability, you see, but of inclination. What will he **choose** to do? This places it within the affective domain.

Now, of course, if the student is **incapable** of grasping the meaning of any opinion except his own, then we would need to put

aside our affective criterion for the time being and work with our student on certain objectives having to do with his ability to understand ideas at variance with his own. Again, at issue for any objective in the **affective** domain is not the question of what a student **can** do, but of what he **will** do, given an appropriate opportunity.

However, because the matter **is** one of **choice** rather than capability, an interesting problem arises. With regard to cognitive and psychomotor tasks, we are, or should be, eager to let the student know what we would like to have him do. Then in the test situation, he either can or he can't. And that, for the moment at least, is that.

Not so with the affective domain! Because the student is already **able** to do what we would like to have him do, it may turn out that he will perform in a certain way **when we are present,** or **believed to be monitoring his activities,** merely to please us, or raise his grade, or some such thing. In other words, with respect to the affective domain, telling the student what our objective is poses the problem of **gathering evidence** that can be regarded as trustworthy. An activity that is undertaken simply to placate the instructor is hardly in keeping with behavior that is practiced because of its enduring value to the practitioner. For this reason, some educators advocate keeping objectives for the affective domain **under the table**, so to speak, in order to minimize the likelihood of students "conning" the teacher.

Without denying the force of this argument, it should be pointed out that such a position provides a devastating commentary on the present state of affairs in American formal schooling! What it says, in effect, is that students cannot afford to be honest with us. Unless they can successfully pretend to believe things they do not believe, to feel things they do not feel, the system will punish them.

Because we have all been students ourselves, there would seem to be little need to elaborate on the truth of this assertion. The student who does not pay at least lip service to the prescribed pieties of the establishment is in trouble. This fact, in combination with some of the operational hypocrisies of the system, adds its fuel to the current fire of student unrest.

So what can be done about the affective domain with respect to our classrooms? We need again to make the distinction between that an individual is **able** to do, and what he **prefers** to do.

Let's suppose that among other things our instructional program is concerned to teach skills in the area of group process. In part, this may have to do with the development of certain leadership skills. Of these, within the framework of a democratic society, may be the ability to get all the members of a discussion group to contribute to the discussion.

In this connection, an objective in the **cognitive** domain might read as follows: Given the role of leader for a discussion group, the student is **able** to elicit verbal contributions from every member of the group regarding the topic under discussion. Our student-leader is able to accomplish this without himself being the most talkative member of the group.

Not every person cast in the role of a discussion leader automatically possesses this particular skill. For example, some discussion leaders seem to feel obliged to comment on everything that anyone else says. Other leaders apparently do not know how to use techniques that might be effective in dealing with a group member whose negative comments are blocking the flow of discussion for the group as a whole. And so on. The point is that leadership skills are acquired skills, and their acquisition and development fall into the area of cognitive accomplishments.

On the other hand, the **willingness** of an individual to employ these skills after he knows how to do so falls into the affective domain. Our leadership objective revised now for the **affective** domain might read as follows: Whenever he has the role of leader for a discussion group, the student **will** elicit verbal contributions from every member of the group regarding the topic under discussion. He will accomplish this without himself being the most talkative member of the group.

Isn't this the same objective as before? Definitely not! In the first instance, the question was whether the student would be **able** to do the job. In the second instance, the question is whether the student will **choose** to do this as a general pattern of leadership behavior. The second objective assumes that the student **knows how** to accomplish the task. If he does not, then, of course, we need to set him to work on the first objective.

Q. If a student knows how to do the job we are talking about, why can't we count on his doing it whenever he can?

A. Well, let's see. Suppose our student-leader has a proposal for which he wishes to gain the approval of the group. And let's say that he has reason to believe that his chances for getting this approval will be best if his proposal is not discussed in detail. Under these circumstances, unless his personal commitment to democratic leadership procedures outweighs his desire to have his proposal approved, he may do what he can to close off discussion as soon as possible, and to bypass his potential critics in the process.

It is a question of values, really. Values, preferences, choices, are what the affective domain is all about. And their successful development depends upon setting up a learning environment that will be generally rewarding to the individual who chooses to function in accordance with the desired values. This will **not guarantee** the out-of-school employment of the valued behavior. But it will at least increase the likelihood of its continuation. That is probably the best that schools can do.

Size of Objectives

Still a further question is this: How small do performance objectives have to be? Won't the classroom teacher soon find herself trapped in the role of a glorified clerk, doing little but checking students in and out of a programed sequence of performance objectives? In this kind of a setup, how can a teacher really teach?

There is no easy answer to the question of how large a performance objective should be. It is important that performance objectives be small enough to permit students to experience

success at frequent intervals. Also, if and when learning breaks down, it is important to be able to identify the points at which difficulties occur. A performance objective that lumps together several criterion tasks will make it harder to locate the sources of any problem that may arise.

On the other hand, performance objectives should not be so small that a teacher has to spend most of his time checking students in and out of objectives. And it should be remembered that students with faster rates of learning are able to handle long-range objectives better than slower students who can respond best to relatively short assignments.

What all of this amounts to is that there is no one optimum size for performance objectives. The best size for any given objective can be determined only by a consideration of such factors as:

— the abilities and interests of the students for whom it is intended;

— the extent to which the available instructional materials and activities will provide self-correcting information for the students who pursue the designated objective;

— and the degree to which the monitoring, checking, and record keeping functions of the system can be adequately undertaken by means that do not directly involve the teacher at every step along the way.

New Roles for Teachers

This last point refers to the possible use of students and teacher aides, as well as the creation of simplified scoring and recording systems, all for the purpose of freeing professional staff members from some of the routine and time-consuming duties that now encumber them.

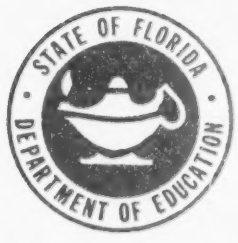
The promise of differentiated staffing is pertinent here. If we want students to interact with the learning environment in ways that will enhance their capabilities as self-directed learners, we must call into serious question the traditional practice of having teachers operate as interchangeable parts, each one being expected to carry out the same range of functions with equal skill. As is true of other human beings, teachers are generally more competent in one area than in another. We should capitalize upon this fact instead of ignoring it as we so often do.

For example, it may be that one teacher has a special talent for specifying appropriate and imaginative performance criteria. Another staff member may be very good at constructing test items or situations that will adequately measure accomplishment of performance objectives. Some teachers may be best at organizing instructional resources to help students meet stated objectives; others may serve most effectively as small group discussion leaders or, when possessing the special charisma of actors, as star performers for large group presentations. Still

other personnel might contribute most as individuals involved in diagnosing learning difficulties, or perhaps as persons especially interested in developing the kinds of efficient information retrieval capabilities that an instructional system must have if it is to function well.

This, of course, requires looking at the role of the teacher in a new way. The teacher can no longer be thought of primarily as an educational broadcaster whose job it is to stand in front of class, giving students the word. Instead, the role of the teacher as a competent professional is essentially one of **decision-making** — in particular, making decisions concerning the instructional environment so as to promote self-directed learning.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that you should **not** begin by supposing that you already know what a specific staffing pattern ought to be. This determination should follow, rather than precede, an **analysis** of what instructional arrangements will best promote certain kinds of student learning. And the conclusions emerging for any local situation should be based upon the factors present within that situation. Above all, differentiated staffing should not be viewed as an end product, but rather as an evolving process that can help to improve the quality of the learning environment.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TALLAHASSEE • FLORIDA

FLOYD T. CHRISTIAN, COMMISSIONER

AUG 12 1970

Designed and Illustrated by Judith Nable – Tallahassee, Florida